Greenbelt Policy

1. Legal and planning Background

1.1. Part of Berkswell Parish is within the greenbelt. Balsall Common is "inset" within the greenbelt and greenbelt rules do not apply. The greenbelt "washes over" other settlements within the parish and greenbelt rules do apply.

1.2. The greenbelt is afforded special protection from inappropriate development by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This has the status of statutory guidance with respect to planning matters and consequently has the force of law.

1.3. Over the years most of the greenbelt within the parish has been termed as forming part of the Meriden Gap between the conurbations of Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull. In planning inquiries and appeals it is often termed the "strategic Meriden Gap".

1.4. Development within the greenbelt is permitted under the NPPF but is restricted to development that is considered "not inappropriate". These are listed within the NPPF and include the use of grey belt land. The NPPF also allows for development in very special circumstances where the potential harm to the greenbelt is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Consideration includes instances where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means. Until Solihull adopts a new local plan or approves significant new developments, their housing supply is insufficient and this consideration has been found to be met.

1.5. Greybelt land has been defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (1.7.1), (1.7.2), or (1.7.4) below. Purposes 1.7.1 ,1.7.2 and 1.7.4 do not apply to villages according to Government Greenbelt Guidance updated 27 February 2025. Definition of strong, moderate and weak contributions are also enclosed within this guidance. At a meeting of the Solihull Planning Committee 30th April 2025, Balsall Common was defined as a small town.

1.6. It is noted that elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

1.7. The NPPF defines 5 purposes for the greenbelt. The greenbelt within Berkswell Parish meets four of these purposes.

1.7.1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

1.7.2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

1.7.3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

1.7.4. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

1.8. The NPPF lays down that the boundaries of the greenbelt can only be adjusted as part of a Local Plan making process. However, once land has been removed from the greenbelt as part

of a local plan the normal planning policies for non-greenbelt areas apply which provide a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

2. The powers of the Parish Council

Berkswell PC is a statutory consultee for planning applications. It can provide input into the decision-making process and has the right of audience at the planning committee. It does not take a substantive decision on planning applications.

3. The general approach of the parish council for the protection of the greenbelt

3.1. The parish council supports the protection of the greenbelt from development in as far as the law allows so that the four purposes of the greenbelt within Berkswell Parish are met.

3.2. For any planning application within the greenbelt the parish council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the rules of the NPPF are fully implemented to protect the greenbelt from inappropriate development

3.3. When the boundaries of the greenbelt are to be reviewed as part of the Local Plan process the council will

3.3.1. Recommend and propose development outside of the greenbelt shall be given first priority

3.3.2. Recommend and propose the development of highly and/or moderately accessible brownfield land before any greenfield land within the greenbelt is considered.

3.3.3. Seek to ensure that the land assessed as being of the highest value in meeting the purposes of the greenbelt is protected over that having a lower contribution to the purposes of the greenbelt. The Council will seek to ensure that any assessment method used for determining the contribution of land to the greenbelt is undertaken in a robust and fair manner.

3.4. Seek to ensure that the planners and planning committee within SMBC implement appropriate policies within any made Neighbourhood Development Plan.